

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: Tuesday 11 September 2018

Time: 2.00pm – 4.25pm

Venue: Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, Cambridge

Present: Councillors S Bywater (Chairman), S Hoy (Vice Chairwoman), A Bradnam, K Cuffley, D Connor, P Downes, L Every, A Hay, S Taylor and J Whitehead

Co-opted members: A Read and F Vettese

Apologies: Councillors D Wells (substituted by D Connor) and J Wisson (Substituted by K Cuffley)

CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

134. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were noted as recorded above. There were no declarations of interest. The Chairman reminded Members that they could also make a declaration of interest at any time in the meeting should this be appropriate.

135. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 10 JULY 2018

The minutes of the meeting on 10 July 2018 were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

136. ACTION LOG

The action log was reviewed and the following updates noted:

- i. Minute 101: Educational Performance in Cambridgeshire in the 2016/17 Academic Year
The Business Intelligence Team would revise the format of the information when the validated results for 2018 were brought to the Committee in January 2019 to show where Cambridgeshire was placed in comparison to the highest and lowest performing local authorities at Key Stage 4, rather than its ranking.
- ii. Minute 127: Update on Progress made by the Children's Health Joint Commissioning Unit on the integration of children, young people and families services and plans for the Health Child Programme (0-19)
The Committee might wish to review this annually. Officers offered an additional briefing note on the number of missed Health Visitor visits.
(Action: Consultant in Public Health Medicine/ Democratic Services Officer)

137. PETITIONS

No petitions were received

KEY DECISIONS

138. **AMALGAMATION OF EASTFIELD INFANT AND NURSERY SCHOOL AND WESTFIELD JUNIOR SCHOOL, ST IVES (KD2018/049)**

The Strategic and Policy Places Planning Manager stated that in October 2012 the then Cabinet had committed to replacing temporary accommodation at the Eastfield Infant and Nursery School and Westfield Junior School sites with permanent accommodation and to increase the number of places available at both schools. Consultation on amalgamating the two schools had been overwhelmingly positive and in autumn 2017 the governing bodies had made a decision in principle to amalgamate the two schools. This was consistent with the Council's preference for all-through primary schools, but the final decision would rest with the Office of the Schools Adjudicator.

The existing schools were built in the 1960s and recent feasibility studies had identified deficiencies in the accommodation which would require capital expenditure in excess of the £7m cost originally identified in 2015 for all of the three options identified in the report. Options One and Two would also incur additional costs of around £3m relating to a ten year condition and maintenance programme.

The Chairman stated that he had received requests to speak on this item from the Headteachers of both Eastfield Infant and Nursery School and Westfield Junior School. The Council did not usually allow people whom it employed to speak at Committee meetings as they had sufficient channels of communication through their representative bodies. However, in this case he had exercised his discretion and had accepted the requests. Both public speakers had submitted an outline of the points which they wished to make in advance and these had been circulated to members of the Committee for information. He invited Lucy Roberts, Headteacher of Westfield Junior School, to address the Committee.

Ms Roberts stated that Westfield Junior School had opened in 1964 and no significant upgrade had been made to the accommodation since then. There were four mobile classrooms in use and accommodation pressures were impacting on pupil standards and staff morale. The most vulnerable children were the worst affected. There were health and safety concerns regarding the kitchen and asbestos within the infrastructure of the building. Only the option of a new build would address all of these concerns. The proposal for a purpose-built through primary school was enthusiastically embraced by both schools and by the local community.

The Chairman invited Lisa Valla, Headteacher of Eastfield Infant and Nursery School, to address the Committee. Mrs Valla stated that both parents and staff strongly supported the proposed amalgamation. She had previously been a headteacher at an all-through primary school and saw real advantage to avoiding the disruption of a transition to a new school at the end of Year 2. Current infrastructure issues included a boiler which was 30 years old, a cost of £1.5k per year to pump sewage due to defective drainage, inadequate staff parking and an extended lunch break needed to accommodate all pupils. In response to a question of clarification from a Member, Mrs Valla confirmed a high level of parental support for the proposed amalgamation.

The following comments arose in discussion of the report and in response to questions:

- A Member described the proposed amalgamation as a good idea in principle, but commented that they would want to see a more detailed business case for each of

the three options described before reaching a final decision. They questioned whether refurbishment of the existing schools would resolve all of the issues described by the two headteacher and, if this was not the case, whether refurbishment could be considered to offer good value for money. Several Members agreed, stating that an improved business case was needed for each of the three options proposed to enable the Committee to reach an informed decision on the financial viability of each of the proposals;

- The Vice Chairwoman commented that a merger appeared sensible, but that she did not feel that the Committee had enough information to make such a significant decision at this time. She suggested that Members might want to approve the merger in principle, subject to the provision of more detailed business cases being provided to a future meeting;
- Officers confirmed that there was no proposal to sell any part of either site and that providing a further report to the Committee in November 2018 would not interrupt the consultation process;
- Officers stated that regulations specified the amount of parking which should be provided.

Summing up, the Chairman stated that the proposed amalgamation seemed sensible, but that the Committee needed to see detailed business cases for each of the three options proposed in order to make a fully informed recommendation to the General Purposes Committee. The preferred option would then be included in the Business Plan submitted to Council in February 2019.

It was resolved:

- a) to agree in principle to an all through primary school, subject to a business plan and options being brought back to the Committee in November 2018.

139. RECOMMISSIONING OF YOUNG CARERS' SERVICES ACROSS CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH (KD2018/064)

The Commissioner for Children's Services stated that local authorities were required by statute to take reasonable steps to identify young carers within their area in need of support. It was proposed to run a single procurement process across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough for the recommissioning of both Adult Carer Services and Young Carer Services. A correction to paragraph 3.12 to the published papers was reported as the aim would be for the new contract to start in February 2020, and not September 2019 as stated.

The following points arose in discussion of the report and in response to questions:

- An assurance was sought that services would be protected if the procurement process was amalgamated and that funding for Centre 33 would not be lost. Officers stated that options within the procurement regulations could benefit small and medium sized enterprises and voluntary organisations. However, it would be open to any provider to tender for the contract, not just Centre 33.

- Paragraph 3.6: Officers stated that the possibility of expanding support services to young carers of primary school age would be tested as part of the pre-tender work phase, but the intention at this stage was that it should be included.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) agree to the tender of Young Carers' services jointly with Peterborough City Council and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) through the Peterborough and Cambridgeshire Joint Commissioning Board
- b) agree to delegating authority to the Director of Commissioning to commit funding at the time of the award of the contract.
(Action: Director of Commissioning/ Democratic Services Officer)

DECISIONS

140. FREE SCHOOL PROPOSALS

Standing item. No business to discuss.

141. VARIATION TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chairman stated his intention to vary the order of business to take Item 11: Children's Services Budget Pressures alongside the Finance and Performance report to allow the Committee to consider the two financial reports side by side.

142. FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT JULY 2018

The Strategic Finance Business Partner stated that as of the end of July 2018 the People and Communities Directorate was forecasting an overspend of £4,690k. This represented a worsening position from the previous month when an overspend of £3,868k had been forecast. The number of Looked After children had remained relatively stable over the summer months which was positive, but there was a significant increase in the cost of home to school transport, particularly for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). An overspend of £0.75m was currently forecast on this element of the budget, but this was expected to increase. Other key areas of pressure were the Looked After Children Placements budget and the Children in Care budget.

Arising from the report, Members:

- commented that the Total Transport Group had carried out valuable work funded by a Government research grant which had turned an overspend on general home to school transport from an overspend to an underspend. The Group had carried out some preliminary work in relation to SEND transport and a Member suggested that the Group might be asked to revisit this, possibly with an application for Transformation Funding. Officers stated that work on this was on-going and that reports on SEND sufficiency and the Outcome Focused Review of school admissions and transport would be brought to future meetings. This would cover the possibility of seeking Transformation Funding;
(Action: Service Director: Education)

- Asked whether officers liaised with District Councils regarding the location of SEND provision in relation to new and existing housing developments and communities. Officers confirmed that this was being covered in the current work on SEND sufficiency;
- The Chairman asked that the Business Intelligence Team ensured in future reports that all graphs and tables were clearly understandable in black and white copy; (**Action:** Head of Business Intelligence)
- Noted that the number of pupils attending schools judged Good or Outstanding by Ofsted and the percentage of disadvantaged households taking up funded childcare places for two years olds had both dropped. Officers stated that some Good and Outstanding schools had converted to academies which impacted on the local authority's figures. There had also been less good Ofsted results for some schools, and officers were working with them to support improvement. More detailed feedback on this would be provided to the Educational Improvement Board. Officers were also continuing to market the childcare offer, including linking with healthcare colleagues. In response to a request by a Member, officers undertook to provide Ofsted figures relating to academies. (**Action:** Service Director: Education)

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Review and comment on the report.

143. CHILDREN'S SERVICES BUDGET PRESSURES

The Service Director for Children's Services and Safeguarding stated that a restructure of Children's Services was currently taking place to further refine the changes made in recent years. The number of children in care in Cambridgeshire remained higher than was seen in the county's statistical neighbours, but should also be seen in the context of an upward trend nationally in numbers of children in care. It was positive that overall numbers had remained relatively stable over the summer, but a new pressure had emerged in relation to unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) following 22 spontaneous arrivals during a six week period. This was being followed up as part of wider work on UASC which was taking place within the Eastern Region. A new initiative to try to attract new in-house foster carers would be launched the following day.

Arising from the report, Members:

- Asked for more information about UASC. Officers stated that the majority were aged 16-17. They were primarily accommodated in relatively low cost supported accommodation, but most of the available stock locally had now been used so alternative and more costly accommodation was now sometimes required which cost more than was received through government grant funding. The Home Office was taking longer to reach decisions about some of these young people's asylum status as they became adults due to a backlog of complex cases which was increasing the pressure on local services;
- Sought more information on the comment that intended family meetings were not taking place. Officers acknowledged the importance of these meetings and stated that part of the Transformation Funding agreed by the General Purposes Committee was being used to address this issue. This included looking at the

best way to organise and support these meetings going forward. A Member commented that they would like to see this point followed up in the next update report.

(Action: Service Director: Children's Services and Safeguarding)

- The Chairman welcomed the initiative to attract new in-house foster carers which would be launched the following day. Badges were available to all Members and public-facing officers inviting those they met to ask them about fostering so that they could sign-post requests.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) note and comment on the report.

144. UPDATE ON EDUCATION STRATEGY AND PLAN

The Service Director for Education stated that he had now been in post for six months. During that time he had visited numerous schools and partner organisations and sought their views on local authority education services. His report focused on four key areas:

1. A school survey of Local Authority (LA) education services: This had attracted a good level of engagement from schools and highlighted areas of strength as well as those where improvements might be made. Some of the concerns expressed had already been addressed and work was on-going on the remainder.
2. A shared and integrated education services programme: A focus on increasing the quality of services provided and driving innovation through a strategic analysis across both Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
3. Early Years Peer Review: Officers had jointly commissioned a peer review of early years' services with Peterborough City Council. Examples of existing good practice had been identified alongside some recommendations for further improvements;
4. The emerging strategy: The role of the LA was still wanted, alongside the offer of other partners. Further work would be carried out in the autumn with a full plan brought back to the Committee towards the end of the year.

Arising from the report, Members:

- Asked for confirmation of which schools had been included in the survey. Officers stated that all schools – maintained, academy and independent – had been included;
- Commented that greater clarity was needed with Academies regarding the services provided by the LA and those for which the Academy Trust was responsible. The Service Director for Education stated that the division of responsibilities was now quite clear and undertook to circulate a document setting out the LA's statutory responsibilities;
(Action: Service Director for Education)
- Asked whether officers had compared the survey findings with those received to previous surveys. Officers confirmed that they had reviewed the findings of the surveys carried out in 2008 and 2002, but that the academic landscape had changed so significantly in the intervening years that the scope for direct

comparison was limited. However, the same survey questions used in 2018 would be sent to all schools next year and the Service Director for Education had set a clear expectation to officers that improvements would be seen;

- Paragraph 2.8.5: Commented that engagement between the LA and academies needed to be a two way process. A Co-opted Member commented that there had been a step-change in the relationship between academies and the LA since the new Service Director for Education had been appointed. The Chairman welcomed this comment and emphasised the importance of all partners working together in the best interests of Cambridgeshire's children;
- Paragraph 2.8.9: Welcomed the fact that headteachers were willing to ask for support when needed. Officers confirmed that they were making clear the support available and facilitating access to this;
- Paragraph 2.8.12: Expressed concern at the perception that place planning and admissions processes were slow, unresponsive and reactive. Officers confirmed that that work to increase transparency in this area was critical;
- Commented that the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee attached great importance to Early Years provision for Looked After Children and had asked for a focus on this from the Virtual School. The Service Director for Education acknowledged the importance of this issue and the Virtual School's wider work. A review had been commissioned into the Virtual School which would inform work going forward;
- Asked what response had been made to the recommendations contained on the Local Government Association's Early Years Peer Review. Officer stated that the report had been received at the end of July 2018 so responses to the recommendations would be covered in the next update report to the Committee;
- Questioned the comment in the Early Years Peer Review report that there had been a lack of challenge or scrutiny at a political level around the early years' agenda. Members commented that considerable time had been given both by the Children and Young People Committee and by full Council to considering changes to the Children's Centre offer in autumn 2017. The Executive Director stated that the comment had referred to the Health Committee rather than to the Children and Young People Committee, but that it was incorrect. The Health Committee had addressed the issue and the Health and Wellbeing Board would be considering a report on the impact of the Early Years Social Mobility Peer Review on the work of services commissioned by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Joint Child Health Commissioning Unit at its meeting on 20 September 2018. A copy of this report would be circulated to Committee members for information;
(**Action:** Democratic Services Officer)
- A Co-opted Member commented that there could sometimes be a disconnect between national policy and the local landscape. In these cases it was to the benefit of all to be supportive of officers as they worked to align policies and processes. The Service Director welcomed the support of Academy Trusts in this process and the Vice Chairwoman stated that it would be unfair to suggest that all councillors saw a divide between maintained and academy schools;

Summing up, the Chairman offered his personal thanks to the Service Director for Education on his outstanding effort since taking up his post. The school survey had offered an invaluable insight into schools' perception of the role of the LA and he welcomed the offer of further update reports on the emerging strategy.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) review the progress in ensuring Cambridgeshire has a high quality Education service which promotes and supports good outcomes for all children and young people;
- b) note and comment on recommendations from the Early Years Social Mobility Peer Review and plans to develop an Early Years Strategy which will support the wider redesign and integration of relevant children, young people and families services;
- c) request regular reports on the work of the Programme Board and the emerging strategy.

145. CONSIDERATION OF EXEMPTION FROM COUNCIL TAX FOR CARE LEAVERS

The Chairman stated that Councillor Claire Richards was unable to attend the Committee in person to speak on this item, but that copies of her written comments had been circulated to all members of the Committee for information and were available at the meeting in hard copy (copy attached at Appendix 1).

The Service Director for Children's Services and Safeguarding stated that the question of a possible exemption from council tax for care leavers had been raised by the Voices Matter panel through the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee. Superficially it appeared a good idea, but in practice it would be difficult to put in a place a fair and consistent policy at a local level. Care leavers were already recognised as a potentially vulnerable group and in recognition of this there was lots of support already available to them. There was a larger number of vulnerable young people who were not care leavers and who did not receive this additional support. To implement this policy solely in relation to Cambridgeshire's care leavers was judged to be at high risk of legal challenge, but to extend it to all care leavers residing in the county without reciprocal arrangements existing nationally would create an additional financial pressure. Cambridgeshire had already invested significantly in extending the support provided to its care leavers up to the age of 25. If required, the resources to fund an exemption from council tax for all care leavers residing in the county would need to be met from within the existing Children's Services budget.

Arising from the report:

- The Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee thanked officers for providing such a comprehensive support. She had hoped it would be possible to grant the exemption to care leavers, but having seen the complexity of the issue and in particular the implications for out of county provision she was content to approve the recommendations presented. The Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee would though want to look in more detail at the full package of support available to care leavers, including the support provided to teach budget management and life skills;
(**Action:** Democratic Services Officer)

- A Member commented that council tax relief was already available to single person households and suggested that a national policy which extended this discount to all young people under the age of 25 would be a fairer solution. The Executive Director undertook to pick this up under recommendation (c) to the report and to circulate her letter to central Government for information; (**Action**: Executive Director: People and Communities)
- Members questioned whether the threshold for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) being considered as adults should be raised to 25 in line with the position in relation to care leavers and asked what happened currently in practical terms when an UASC turned 18. Officers stated that they were not permitted to work or to claim benefits whilst their application for asylum was processed so the Local Authority was required to support them. The Home Office provided a grant for this, but it no longer covered the full costs incurred which meant that a shortfall of up to £600k was possible. The Vice Chairman commented that a response to supporting UASC was a national issue and suggested that a major piece of work was needed to look holistically at the full range of issues involved, including ensuring that young people were not left isolated by the location of their accommodation. Officers confirmed that maintaining contact with cultural support networks was taken into account in considering accommodation options, but that best practice could not always be achieved due to the practical pressures involved in finding places;
- Noted suggestions that some young people claiming to be UASC were in fact aged over 18. Officers stated that the majority of those claiming to be UASC had no documentation on arrival in the United Kingdom so a national protocol was followed in making a formal age assessment;
- Asked what would happen if additional UASC arrived in Cambridgeshire if the county had already filled its quota. Officers stated that the young people would be accommodated by another Local Authority in the Eastern Region on the basis of a rota system for those Authorities below their quota.

Summing up, the Chairman stated that the possible exemption from council tax for care leavers and unaccompanied asylum seeking children were both national issues. As such, he proposed that the Committee should await responses to the Director of Children's Services' letters to central Government and her Eastern Region colleagues before deciding next steps. The position could also be reviewed by Lead Members in the intervening period if required.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) note the content of the report;
- b) approve the recommendation that adopting a scheme that exempts care leavers from paying Council Tax would not be appropriate in the absence of any national arrangements in this area;
- c) support the Director of Children's Services writing to Central Government to support the development of a properly funded national scheme of Council Tax relief that supports all young people living independently;
- d) support the Director of Children's Services writing to Eastern Region colleagues and Central Government to request assistance in relation to provision of support to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and Care Leavers in Cambridgeshire.

MONITORING AND INFORMATION ITEMS

146. PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES RISK REGISTER

The Executive Director for People and Communities stated that the Council had a corporate risk register which was submitted to the Audit and Accounts Committee as part of a performance report and reviewed annually by the General Purposes Committee. In addition to this, the People and Communities (P&C) Directorate had its own risk register which contained key strategic risks identified within its own business areas. The Committee was being invited to review those risks identified within the P&C Directorate which related to its areas of responsibility. The report followed a similar structure to previous years, but a greater emphasis had been placed on recruitment and retention within the social care workforce. Risks were identified by the Service and were reviewed by senior officers within the P&C Directorate on a monthly basis.

Arising from the report:

- Appendix 1, Risk 12 – MOSAIC: Officers stated that this risk related to business with the remit of the Adults Committee. Future reports would make clear which risks related to the Children and Young People Committee's remit; (**Action:** Governance Manager)
- Officers stated that an initiative to recruit social workers from overseas was showing positive results.

The Chairman thanked officers for a helpful summary of the identified risks and particularly the table at Appendix 1 which Members had found most useful. It was resolved to:

- a) note and comment on the People and Communities Risk Register.

147. CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2017-18

The Head of Service for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Boards offered apologies from Dr Russell Wate QPM, the Independent Chair of the Boards, who was unable to attend due to a previous commitment. The Safeguarding Boards had a statutory responsibility to present an annual report to the Local Authority for scrutiny. The report before the Committee covered the period March 2017-April 2018 and represented the first report since the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Boards had joined together. Key elements in the report included:

- two serious case reviews relating to cases of child sexual exploitation (CSE) which had received very positive preliminary feedback and attracted the attention of the National Centre for Child Sexual Exploitation;
- work with faith groups to develop bespoke safeguarding training courses. Training had been delivered to 78 groups during the period covered, of whom three had invited the Board to conduct an audit of their processes and files;
- a continuing focus on cases of neglect;

- the delivery of safeguarding training to over 1700 groups and individuals during the period.

Arising from the report,

- Members commended the report as being useful and informative;
- Noted that whilst Cambridgeshire as a whole ranked 133 out of 152 upper tier authorities in relation to deprivation (where 1 was the most deprived) the report also highlighted that eight of the top ten most deprived Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Cambridgeshire were located in Fenland and that 12 out of 16 of the 20% of the most deprived LSOAs nationally were also in Fenland. The Head of Service for the Safeguarding Boards stated that the Public Health Directorate had asked for the information on deprivation to be broken down to Division level to help identify those areas and communities in most acute need. Officers also stated that Opportunity Area Funding was being actively pursued;
- Board attendance and membership: It was confirmed that substitutes were used and that it was a requirement that substitutes had the necessary authority to approve the decisions being taken;
- Asked what action was taken in relation to children identified as being at risk of child sexual exploitation. The Head of Service for the Safeguarding Boards stated that this was a priority area for the Board. Full gap analyses were carried out in addition to the examination of individual cases. The Board also worked alongside partner organisations with responsibilities in this area including Community Safety Partnerships and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Health and Wellbeing Boards.

Summing up, the Chairman stated that as a member of the Safeguarding Board he welcomed the renewed enthusiasm which had accompanied the joining of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Boards and appointment of the new Head of Service. There was some great work being done in relation to child sexual exploitation and he encouraged members to attend the safeguarding training offered which he had found to be very good.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) note the content of the report.

DECISIONS

148. AGENDA PLAN, APPOINTMENTS AND TRAINING PLAN

The Committee noted the following changes to the published agenda plan:

- i. New Item: 9 October 2018 – Recommendation to close the Residential Element of Victoria Road Children's Home, Wisbech
- ii. New Key Decision: 13 November 2018 - Update on implementation of Child and Family Centre, and exemption to extend the contract with Ormiston Families for the provision of Child and Family Centre services for March, Chatteris and Whittlesey (KD 2018/075)

- iii. October 2018: Placement Sufficiency for Looked After Children: Six Month Update Report – deferred until November 2018
- iv. November 2018: East Cambs Secondary School Review: Phase 1 – deferred to January 2019
- v. New Item: January 2019 – Sufficiency of school places and Special Education Needs Places

Details of these changes would be circulated to all Committee members for information.
(**Action:** Democratic Services Officer)

There had been no expressions of interest in the vacancy on the Cambridgeshire Culture Steering Group. Members' views would continue to be represented by the two remaining appointees, Councillors Kavanagh and Joseph.

A training session on special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) had been arranged for MPs to which Committee members would also be invited.

Chairman
(date)

Item: 10 Consideration of Exemption from Council Tax for Care Leavers

Comments from Councillor Claire Richards:

Points for the CYP committee- care leavers and council tax.

I am very disappointed indeed and taken aback by the recommendation that care leavers should not be exempt from council tax. I had proposed a motion and on this and was told that the committee needed time to collect the information.

It is indicated in the paper under there is a lack of consistency across the councils on this issue. I would draw the committee to Motion to fully exempt Care Leavers from paying Council Tax
All Councillors are 'corporate parents' with responsibility for the care and well-being of Children in Care.

From the age of 18 (when they become 'Care Leavers') up to the age of 25 care leavers are obliged to pay Council Tax.

At present, Council Tax exemption extends (for example) to students but not to Care Leavers. Organisations such as Save the Children have lobbied for care leavers to be exempt from paying Council Tax.

In a letter dated 21st December 2016, the Department for Communities and Local Government wrote to English Local Authorities outlining the government's 'ambitions' for care leavers as included in their current strategy articulated in the corporate parenting responsibilities in the Children and Social Work Bill. It includes the opportunity for care leavers to 'achieve financial stability'. Best practice was identified in 'local authorities' who provide 'additional support to care leavers, including using existing freedoms to support vulnerable groups, such as Care Leavers, to meet their Council Tax payments'. These freedoms include exemptions and discounts.

Cambridgeshire County Council is not in the group of local authorities coming within this 'best practice' model. This motion identifies how the Council can address effectively the adoption of 'best practice' so as to accord with the government's 'ambitions' per the above noted letter.

The grant of discount / relief to the individual payee is made formally by the collection authority (District / City). Practice for granting discount/relief on Council Tax and exempting Care Leavers from paying varies across the County. For example, in Cambridge the City Council exempts all care leavers (to the age of 25 and, from 2019, whether classed 'vulnerable' or not) from paying Council Tax. In other collection authorities, care leavers are not included in the vulnerable group and are required to pay a percentage of the Council Tax.

The County Council has the power to fund the collection authority for providing discount/relief for Council Tax paid by care leavers.

Reasons given in the paper include that care leavers should face the harsh reality of paying council tax (2.7) and in 2.14 that '

'Given the challenging financial position, any additional funding would need to be identified from elsewhere. In this context, especially given the practical considerations and the need to support young people to develop independence including in the area of being responsible for paying bills, it is unlikely that providing additional funding in this area can reasonably be considered a priority. '

It is very disappointing that this County Council does not consider that it is a priority to support vulnerable young people for whom we are responsible in this context and follow the best practice-urged by Save the Children and the Department for Communities and local government - be adopting best practice models adopted by other councils across the county.